

Worksession

Agenda Item #	5
Meeting Date	November 13, 2006
Prepared By	Daryl Braithwaite Director of Public Works
Approved By	Barbara B. Matthews City Manager

Discussion Item	Certification of Takoma Park as a Wildlife Habitat Community
Background	<p>Several organizations in Takoma Park have started a campaign to encourage area residents to have their backyards certified as supporting wildlife habitat. These organizations include Friends of Sligo Creek, the Committee on the Environment, and the Horticulture Club.</p> <p>Requirements for being designated as a wildlife community include a commitment by at least 150 property owners, as well as support from several schools and use of several City park areas. Criteria include providing food, shelter, water, and habitation for rearing young.</p> <p>Bruce Sidwell, President of Friends of Sligo Creek, Tim Male of the Committee on the Environment, and Lori Radloff of the Takoma Horticulture Club will be in attendance to describe the campaign and to request the Council's support of the effort.</p>
Policy	The City Council has historically supported environmental projects that involve the community and are sustainable.
Fiscal Impact	None
Attachments	Testimony of Bruce Sidwell, President of Friends of Sligo Creek
Recommendation	For Discussion Only
Special Consideration	

(Testimony of Bruce Sidwell, President of Friends of Sligo Creek, 11/13/06)

Takoma Park as a Wildlife Habitat
A proposal to seek certification of Takoma Park as a Community Wildlife Habitat

The National Wildlife Federation encourages communities to improve their value to wildlife by having residents “certify their yards and public spaces” as wildlife habitat. Through this effort residents learn more about nature and how to improve prospects for preserving and enhancing the natural parts of our environment.

A number of residents of Takoma Park are pursuing this goal. The charge has been led so far by three organizations, the Committee on the Environment, the Takoma Park Horticulture Club, and the Friends of Sligo Creek. We’ve met about six times over the last half year, discussed our thoughts with some City officials, and have a notion of how to proceed.

Five elements are required for good habitat: food, water, cover, places to raise young, sustainable gardening practices. For a community the size of Takoma Park, at least 100 backyards, 4 common area/ workplaces, and 3 schools need to be “certified”. At last count, 38 backyards are already certified.

Although much of the certification work will be done by volunteers, the City could help in at least several ways: 1) help select City property for designation, 2) as needed, work with volunteers for needed improvements to those properties, 3) provide space for outreach, e.g., bulletin board and table/ bookcase, 4) provide space for presentations on making yards wildlife-friendly, 5) incorporate the certification project into the Arbor Day celebration, 6) pass a resolution favoring certification.

Officials at the Maryland National Capital Park & Planning Commission are supportive of the project.

A rough time-line of possible steps to certification of Takoma Park follows.

November-December ‘06– work with City government on their possible role; contact schools; draft Registration Form to NWF; initial outreach thru newspapers, etc.; prep work for tabling at Farmers’ Market and/or other locations; recruit workers and partners (e.g., Audubon Naturalist Society, businesses, Churches, etc.)

January-February ‘07– set up public place for info exchange; assess/ select City/park areas; work with schools; submit Registration Form; hold workshop on backyard habitat; identify mentors to help residents; begin tabling and other outreach; plan Arbor Day and other possible events such as demo gardens.

March-April ‘07– have great Arbor Day (might break ground for City butterfly garden!); continue outreach, work with City and schools; promote plant exchanges and sales.